

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 AF-10 ARA-10 EA-07 EUR-12
NEA-10 AGRE-00 L-03 FRB-03 OMB-01 ITC-01 SP-02
USIA-06 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 OIC-02 EPG-02 SIL-01 STR-04 TRSE-00
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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAGR, EPAP, UNCTAD, GATT, ITC
SUBJECT: PROPOSED INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER BUREAU

REF: STATE 069250

1. SUMMARY: ITC OFFICIALS CALLED A MEETING JUNE 29 OF IMPORTING COUNTRIES TO DISCUSS DEVELOPMENTS SUBSEQUENT TO THE MEETING OF TROPICAL TIMBER PRODUCING COUNTRIES IN SEPTEMBER 1976. THEY INDICATED THAT A NEGOTIATING SESSION TO CREATE A "TROPICAL TIMBER BUREAU" WOULD BEGIN ON OCTOBER 31 IN GENEVA AND RUN FOR THREE WEEKS. THE NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE BASED ON ANNEX I OF TT/CONF/1 AND COMMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN RECEIVED FROM COUNTRIES ATTENDING THE SEPTEMBER 1976 MEETING. IMPORTING COUNTRIES ARE TO BE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE AS OBSERVERS. INTERESTED IMPORTING COUNTRIES SHOULD INFORM THE ITC.
END SUMMARY.

2. ITC (NORBOM AND HATT-ARNOLD) INVITED REPRESENTATIVES OF SEVERAL IMPORTING COUNTRIES TO DISCUSS DEVELOPMENTS SUBSEQUENT TO SEPTEMBER 1976 CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE ON A TROPICAL TIMBER BUREAU. NORBOM EXPLAINED THAT CON-

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SIDERABLE PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE AT SEPTEMBER '76 CONSULTATIVE MEETING OF TROPICAL TIMBER PRODUCING COUNTRIES, THAT SUBSEQUENT PERIOD HAD BEEN USED TO COLLECT COMMENTS ON DRAFT TEXT AND THAT A NEGOTIATING SESSION WAS BEING CALLED ON OCTOBER 31 TO CREATE A TROPICAL TIMBER BUREAU. NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE BASED ON THE ITC DRAFT CONSTITUTION (TT/CONF/I) AND COMMENTS THEY RECEIVED FROM

EXPORTING COUNTRIES. IMPORTING COUNTRIES ARE TO BE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS AS OBSERVERS BUT EXPORTING COUNTRIES DO NOT CONTEMPLATE FULL MEMBERSHIP (VOTING, ETC.) FOR IMPORTING COUNTRIES. HE POINTED TO THE OBVIOUS BENEFITS OF HAVING IMPORTING COUNTRIES AS ASSOCIATE MEMBERS OF THE BUREAU AND IMPLIED THAT EXPORTING COUNTRIES WERE NOT PREPARED TO FULLY FINANCE THIS NEW ORGANIZATION.

3. THE WEST GERMAN REPRESENTATIVE INDICATED A KEEN INTEREST IN THE PROJECT BUT SAID THAT HIS AUTHORITIES HAD MANY SERIOUS APPREHENSIONS CONCERNING THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION. HE INDICATED THAT THE GERMAN AUTHORITIES TOOK THE PROPOSAL SO SERIOUSLY THAT THE CITY OF HOMBURG WANTED TO BE CONSIDERED TO BE THE SEAT OF THE ORGANIZATION AND WAS PREPARED TO PROVIDE SPACE AND THE NECESSARY IMMUNITIES. HE QUALIFIED THIS INTEREST, HOWEVER, BY STATING THAT EXPORTING COUNTRIES WERE ASKING TOO MUCH IN SEEKING THEIR OWN ORGANIZATION BUT ASKING IMPORTING COUNTRIES TO FINANCE IT. HE STATED HIS AUTHORITIES FOUND THIS DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT AND WOULD FIND MORE FEASIBLE A MIXED ORGANIZATION OF EXPORTERS AND IMPORTERS WHICH WOULD CONCENTRATE ITS EFFORTS ON MARKETING TROPICAL TIMBER -- AN "INSTITUTION THAT WOULD DO PRACTICAL WORK".

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4. NORBOM RESPONDED THAT IT WAS HIS BELIEF THAT MOST EXPORTING COUNTRIES WOULD WISH TO GRANT FULL MEMBERSHIP ONLY TO COUNTRIES WHICH PRODUCED TROPICAL TIMBER, RECOGNIZING THAT THIS WAS NOT NECESSARILY A REALISTIC STANCE. HOWEVER, HE SAID THAT DURING HIS CONSULTATIONS IN LDC CAPITALS, MALAYSIAN OFFICIALS INDICATED THAT IMPORTING COUNTRIES SHOULD ALSO BE CONSIDERED FOR FULL MEMBERSHIP. HE INTIMATED THAT IMPORTING COUNTRIES WOULD NEED TO TAKE INITIATIVE TO STRENGTHEN HANDS OF MODERATES, SUCH AS MALAYSIA, IF MEMBERSHIP QUESTION IS TO BE RESOLVED TO THEIR SATISFACTION.

5. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS BY US REPRESENTATIVE (SEE REFTTEL), NORBOM INDICATED THAT MAJOR PLYWOOD MANUFACTURERS, WHO PROCESS AND EXPORT BUT DO NOT PRODUCE TROPICAL TIMBER, COULD ONLY BE CONSIDERED FOR STATUS AS ASSOCIATE MEMBERS, AND THAT A COMPROMISE WAS REACHED DURING SEPTEMBER MEETING WHICH DID NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF EXPANDING THE DEFINITION OF TROPICAL TIMBERS TO INCLUDE CONIFERS. US REPRESENTATIVE ALSO POINTED TO THE MARKED DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE PROBLEM IN THE TRADE OF TROPICAL TIMBERS IDENTIFIED IN THE NARRATIVE OF THE

TT/CONF/1 AND THE OBJECTIVES SET OUT IN THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION ITSELF. FOR EXAMPLE PARA 15 AND 18 ENCOURAGES TROPICAL TIMBER PRODUCERS TO COMBINE THEIR INFLUENCE TO BETTER NEGOTIATE ACCESS IN PARTICULAR MARKETS AND PARAGRAPH 25 IN WHICH THE QUESTION OF MARKET STABILIZATION OPERATIONS IS ADDRESSED. NORBOM INDICATED THAT THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED THE FINAL "SOBER" PRODUCT OF THE CONFERENCE, AS DISTINCT FROM THE NARRATIVE WHICH WAS SIMPLY A RECORD OF THE DISCUSSION. HE STATED FURTHER THAT COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM PRODUCING COUNTRIES HAVE NOT SIGNIFICANTLY AMENDED THE OBJECTIVES AS SET OUT IN ARTICLE 1. NORBOM EXPECTED HOWEVER THAT SUCH QUESTIONS WERE LIKELY TO RISE AGAIN IN THE OCTOBER NEGOTIATING SESSION.

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6. NO IMPORTING COUNTRY OFFICIAL AT THIS MEETING INDICATED DEFINITE INTEREST IN ATTENDING THE NEGOTIATING SESSIONS AND NORBOM LEFT OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF MORE INFORMAL MEETINGS WITH IMPORTING COUNTRIES BETWEEN NOW AND OCTOBER. SORENSON

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